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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the association between affinity-seeking strategies and teacher liking. Data were collected from 251 undergraduate students at the middle of the semester and 178 undergraduate students at the end of the semester on the behavior of an equal number of instructors. Respondents were asked to assess their chosen instructor's affinity-seeking behaviors using a list of 25 affinity-seeking strategies. Liking was measured using a 10-item, 7-step bipolar adjective scale. Results indicated that: (1) the liking scale was determined to be a reliable, stable, unidimensional scale; (2) teachers' use of affinity-seeking strategies was associated with increased liking of teachers by students; (3) the strategies of assume control, reward association, self-inclusion, and similarity had small non-significant correlations with liking; (4) the use of personal autonomy and similarity strategies had negative regression coefficients; and (5) affinity-seeking strategies that were most predictive of liking were assume equality, conversations rule-keeping, elicit other's disclosure, facilitate enjoyment, and optimism. (Three tables of data are included. Contains 15 references.) (RS)

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Affinity-Seeking in the Classroom: Which Strategies are Associated with Liking of the Teacher?

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Abstract

Previous research has found affinity-seeking strategies to be associated with liking and loving in the interpersonal context (Bell & Daly, 1984); however, despite the quantity of research using the affinity-seeking typology in the instructional context, no effort has been made to investigate which affinity-seeking strategies facilitate the most liking in the classroom. The purpose of the present research was to investigate the level of liking associated with each affinity-seeking strategy in the classroom context. As a means to achieve this objective, a generic liking scale was developed and reported.

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The interpersonal relationship between teachers and students is important, with a positive relationship characterized by liking being desired by both. When we want others to like us, we seek affinity. "Affinity" was first introduced as a communication construct by McCroskey and Wheeless (1976) who defined it as "a positive attitude toward another person" (p. 231). They saw this attitude as a perception of liking that included positive perceptions of credibility, attraction, and similarity. McCroskey and Wheeless advanced seven techniques they believed would assist in affinity development. These seven techniques consisted of controlling physical appearance, increasing positive self-disclosure, stressing areas of positive similarity, providing positive reinforcement, expressing cooperation, complying with other's wishes, and fulfilling other's needs. Building upon this earlier work, Bell and Daly (1984) advanced a typology of 25 affinity-seeking techniques that individuals could use to evoke positive feelings. The typology of 25 strategies was developed by asking small groups (consisting of adults and college students) to make a list of things people can say or do to elicit liking. Bell and Daly used Rubin's (1970) liking and loving scales to determine if the use of affinity-seeking strategies resulted in liking. In two different studies, large and significant correlations were found between the affinity-seeking strategies and liking and loving. Bell and Daly (1984) concluded that individuals who used many of the affinity-seeking strategies were perceived to be more likable, socially successful, and satisfied with their lives. Bell and Daly described their affinity-seeking model as a dynamic model of liking, indicating that individuals can and do manipulate their behavior to facilitate liking. The affinity-seeking model differed from previous models of liking and attraction in that the previous models tended to view attraction as a static construct (Bell & Daly, 1984).

Teachers have identified the development of student affinity for themselves and for the subject matter they teach as being important objectives in the classroom (Gorham & Burroughs, 1989). While these objectives are not always easy to achieve, teachers do consciously use strategies to increase student affinity for themselves and for the subject (Gorham & Burroughs, 1989). Gorham, Kelley, and McCroskey (1989) found that teachers use the same affinity-seeking techniques as described in the Bell and Daly (1984) typology. Gorham et al. (1989) also found that the use of affinity-seeking techniques by teachers differed across grade levels, with facilitating enjoyment, nonverbal immediacy, and self-concept confirmation being used more by the lower grade level teachers, and trustworthiness, sensitivity, self-inclusion, and elicit disclosure being used more by teachers in the higher grade levels.

Teacher use of affinity-seeking in the classroom has been linked with increased affective learning, perceived cognitive learning, and increased motivation to study. Richmond (1990) investigated the relationships among affinity-seeking, motivation, and learning. Teachers' affinity-seeking was significantly and moderately correlated with motivation and with both perceived cognitive and affective learning. Five affinity-seeking strategies were found by Richmond to be major contributors to motivation as well as affective and cognitive learning. These strategies were facilitate enjoyment, assume control, nonverbal immediacy, optimism, and self-concept confirmation. Frymier and Thompson (1991) also found teachers' use of affinity-seeking to be positively associated with students' motivation to study, affective learning, and cognitive learning. Teachers' use of affinity-seeking has also been found to contribute to perceptions of teacher credibility, particularly the character dimension (Frymier & Thompson, 1992). Roach (1991)

replicated the relationship between teachers' use of affinity-seeking strategies and student affective learning and perceived cognitive learning, and found faculty and graduate teaching assistants utilized different affinity-seeking strategies. Gender differences have been found in the use of affinity-seeking strategies in an interpersonal context by Richmond, Gorham, and Furio (1987) and by Bell and Daly (1984), but not in the instructional context (Roach, 1991). Frymier and Thompson (1991) attempted to validate the use of affinity-seeking strategies in the classroom by asking students if overall, they liked the teacher on which they were reporting. While they were able to account for approximately 45% of the variance in liking, their use of a dichotomous yes-no response limited their ability to thoroughly validate the use of the affinity-seeking typology in the classroom.

Attraction and Liking

Attraction and liking are similar concepts that play an important role in perceptions of persons and the interpersonal communication that occurs between people (Wilmot, 1987). Byrne (1971) suggested that learning is enhanced by positive interpersonal relationships characterized by liking. Pleasant situations are preferred over unpleasant situations, and if learning takes place in pleasant situations than learning may be enhanced. Byrne went on to cite research by Sapolsky (1960) that found acquisition of verbal tasks was enhanced when students liked the experimenter presenting the task. Liking was manipulated in this experiment by providing subjects with information about the experimenter designed to elicit liking. Byrne cited other research that found subjects learned Spanish words more effectively when in a group with liked peers. Byrne's (1971) proposed relationship between attraction/liking and learning is consistent with the above mentioned

Frymier and Thompson (1992). Richmond (1990) found facilitate enjoyment and optimism to be positively associated with student motivation, affective and cognitive learning. The five above mentioned affinity-seeking strategies may be the most appropriate and useful for the classroom environment. These strategies can be used by a teacher to increase liking and to develop a more cordial relationship with her/his students without sacrificing respect and control of the classroom.

Use of affinity-seeking strategies in the classroom is not a panacea for teachers and education, but the affinity-seeking typology, and the research presented in this paper, does give teachers some concrete strategies for improving their relationships with the students. A positive relationship between teachers and students is important for developing positive attitudes toward education in general, and toward specific learning tasks. There is a vast amount of research that supports the idea that people seek out rewarding experiences and avoid punishing experiences (Grippin & Peters, 1984), therefore it is not surprising that increases in affective learning and state motivation to study have been associated with teacher use of affinity-seeking (Richmond, 1990; Frymier & Thompson, 1991). Educators should not expect students to seek out learning experiences that are associated with boring, uninteresting, and dislikeable teachers. Such teachers represent punishing experiences, and according to reinforcement theory, students by nature will avoid learning experiences that are punishing. Although it is unrealistic to expect use of affinity-seeking by a teacher will make <u>all</u> students like that teacher, it <u>is</u> realistic to expect that more students will like the teacher than not, if a teacher successfully uses appropriate affinity-seeking strategies in the classroom.

RQ: Which affinity-seeking strategies will be most associated with increased liking of the instructor as reported by students?

METHOD

Procedure

The data collected in this study are part of a larger panel study that followed students for an entire semester. Data were collected at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester. At the time of the first data collection, respondents were assigned a three-digit code number and were asked to record this number in their course workbook for future use. At later data collections, respondents were asked to record their code number on the survey instrument.[1]

Respondents

Respondents in this study were 251 undergraduate students (109 females, 138 males, 4 unidentified at time one, and 87 females, 87 males, 4 unidentified at time two) enrolled in basic communication courses at an eastern university. Respondents represented a cross-section of academic disciplines and class ranking. Respondents were instructed to report on the instructor of their class meeting immediately after the course in which they completed the survey instruments. This procedure was used to maximize the number of instructors evaluated, the range of disciplines represented, and to include instructors who otherwise may not agree to participate in such a study. Respondents reported on 137 male instructors, 108 female instructors, and 6 were unidentified at time one. At time two, 105 male, 67 female, and 6 unidentified instructors were reported on.

Measurement

Affinity-Seeking Strategies. Respondents were asked to assess their chosen instructor's affinity-seeking behaviors using the 25 affinity-seeking strategies adapted by McCroskey and McCroskey (1986) for the instructional setting from Bell and Daly's (1984) original work. (See McCroskey & McCroskey, 1986, or Richmond, 1990, for the complete affinity-seeking typology.) Respondents were given the 25 strategies without their corresponding labels. Respondents read each strategy description and were asked to determine if their instructor ever used that strategy (yes-no response), and if yes, how often did he/she use that strategy using a 4-point Likert-type scale. Each strategy was treated as a single-item scale in the analyses.

Liking. Liking was measured using a ten-item, seven-step bipolar adjective scale developed for the purpose of this study. Adjective pairs were chosen based on Andersen's (1968) likableness ratings of words. Andersen had 100 subjects rate 555 words for their likableness and for meaningfulness. Words were chosen from this list that had high meaningfulness ratings and that elicited either very high or very low likableness ratings (words were rated for likableness using a 0-6 Likert-type scale, and for meaningfulness on a 0-4 Likert-type scale). Word pairs chosen from Andersen's (1968) list with likableness (L) and meaningfulness (M) ratings for each word include: likable, L=4.97, M=3.68 - dislikable, L=.90, M=3.40; interesting, L=5.11, M=3.52 - boring*, L=.97, M=3.74; friendly*, L=5.19, M=3.80 - unfriendly*, L=.92, M=3.86; pleasant*, L=4.95, M=3.72 - unpleasant*, L=1.04, M=3.72; sincere*, L=5.73, M=3.70 - phony*, L=.27, M=3.60; thoughtful*, L=5.29, M=3.76 - thoughtless, L=.77, M=3.66; kind*, L=5.20, M=3.68 - unkind*, L=.66, M=3.78; courteous*, L=4.94, M=3.66 - rude*, L=.76, M=3.76; humorous*, L=5.05, M=3.72 - humorless,

humorless, L=1.01, M=3.62. (Starred words indicate words recommended by Andersen, 1968.) One other word pair was chosen, respectable - not respectable. Andersen tested words similar to these words, respectful - disrespectful. However, these words have a slightly different meaning, and in light of the classroom context which this scale is intended for, respectable - not respectable was determined to more accurately reflect the meaning intended than respectful - disrespectful. Respectable and not respectable were also chosen because of Rubin's (1970) work with liking that indicated that respect was an important aspect of liking. A panel of experts reviewed the liking scale items and concluded that the items did reflect general liking.

The liking scale was conceptualized as a unidimensional scale. Responses to the liking items were submitted to principal factor analysis with iteration prior to factor extraction and rotation. Promax oblique rotation was selected to determine the factor structure of the instrument due to the assumption that factors representing liking would be correlated. The unrotated orthogonal matrix was examined first to determine if a single factor solution was appropriate. A unidimensional, single factor solution was required to have all items loaded highest on the first factor of the unrotated matrix with all retained items loading at $\geq$ .60. Criteria for factor extraction was: 1) Eigenvalue equal to or greater than 1.00; 2) examination of the Scree plot for the number of factors; 3) loadings at $\geq$ .50 with at least two items loading at $\geq$ .60 on each factor; and 4) each factor accounting for 5% or more of the variance.

RESULTS

Time One

Factor analysis of the ten item liking scale indicated a one factor solution. Over-all MSA=.93, indicating sampling adequacy. Scree

indicated a one-factor solution, and one factor had an eigenvalue equal to or greater than 1.00. All items loaded at $\geq$ .60 on the first factor in the unrotated factor pattern and accounted for 53% of the variance, therefore all items were retained. See Table 1 for loadings. The liking scale had an alpha reliability of .92, with $\underline{M}$ = 43.42, $\underline{SD}$ = 11.26, and an obtained range of 10-62 (possible range of 10-70).

Table 1

Factor Analysis of the Liking Scale

Items	Time One Loading	Time Two Loadings
1. Likable - Dislikable	.85	.86
2. Boring - Interesting	-.70	-.73
3. Unfriendly - Friendly	-.72	-.81
4. Pleasant - Unpleasant	.79	.80
5. Sincere - Phony	.70	.66
6. Thoughtful - Thoughtless	.76	.85
7. Unkind - Kind	-.78	-.82
8. Courteous - Rude	.65	.72
9. Humorless - Humorous	-.62	-.63
10. Respectable - Not Respectable	.68	.77

To respond to the research question, Pearson Product Moment correlations for each affinity-seeking strategy with liking were first examined. All except five of the 25 affinity-seeking strategies were significantly correlated with liking ($p < .01$). See Table 2. To further investigate the research question, multiple regression was used with liking serving as the criterion variable and the 25 affinity-seeking strategies

serving as predictor variables. The affinity-seeking strategies accounted for 51% of the variance in liking $F(25/250) = 9.23$, $p < .001$. Six of the affinity-seeking strategies accounted for significant ($p < .05$) unique variance in the regression on liking; assume equality, 2%; conversational rule-keeping, 1%; dynamism, 2%; facilitate enjoyment, 1%; personal autonomy, 2%; and similarity, 1%. See Table 2 for the affinity-seeking regression coefficients.

Table 2

Multiple Regression of Affinity-Seeking Strategies on Liking at Time One

Affinity-Seeking Strategy	r	b	ß
1. Altruism	.31*	.45	.05
2. Assume Control	.09	-.03	.00
3. Assume Equality	.46*	1.49*	.20
4. Comfortable Self	.25*	.42	.06
5. Concede Control	.27*	.16	.02
6. Conversational Rule-Keeping	.34*	1.03**	.13
7. Dynamism	.51*	1.25*	.17
8. Elicit Other's Disclosure	.47*	1.01	.13
9. Facilitate Enjoyment	.52*	1.26*	.16
10. Inclusion of Others	.13**	.11	.01
11. Influence Perceptions of Closeness	.17*	-.36	-.03
12. Listening	.33*	-.14	-.02
13. Nonverbal Immediacy	.32*	.15	.02
14. Openness	.26*	.23	.02
15. Optimism	.34*	.54	.07
16. Personal Autonomy	-.17*	-1.26*	-.16
17. Physical Attractiveness	.18*	.15	.02
18. Presenting Interesting Self	.27*	.68	.07
19. Reward Association	-.04	-.73	-.06
20. Self-Concept Confirmation	.21*	.29	.03
21. Self-Inclusion	.07	.56	.03
22. Sensitivity	.30*	.58	.06
23. Similarity	.03	-1.43**	-.13
24. Supportiveness	.18*	.21	.02
25. Trustworthiness	.19*	.14	.02

* $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$

Time Two

Factor analysis of the ten item liking scale again indicated a one factor solution. Over-all MSA=.90, indicating sampling adequacy. Scree indicated a one-factor solution, and one factor had an eigenvalue equal to or greater than 1.00. All items loaded at $\geq$ .60 on the first factor in the unrotated factor pattern and accounted for 59% of the variance, therefore all items were retained. See Table 1 for loadings. At time two, the liking scale had an alpha reliability of .93, with M = 44.02, SD = 11.89, and an obtained range of 10-62 (possible range of 10-70). Test-retest reliability for the liking scale was .78. Using a paired t-test, no significant difference between the means of liking at time one and time two existed ($p < .05$).

Pearson Product Moment correlations between liking and the affinity-seeking strategies and multiple regression were again used to investigate the research question. Four of the 25 affinity-seeking strategies did not have significant Pearson Product Moment correlation with liking ($p < .05$). Three of these strategies were also nonsignificant at time one (assume control, reward association, and self-inclusion). See Table 3. Liking served as the criterion variable and the 25 affinity-seeking strategies served as predictor variables in the multiple regression. The affinity-seeking strategies accounted for 61% of the variance in liking F (25/170) = 9.24, $p < .001$. Seven of the affinity-seeking strategies accounted for significant unique variance in the regression: assume control, 2%; elicit other's disclosure, 2%; facilitate enjoyment, 4%; optimism, 1%; physical attractiveness, 2%; sensitivity, 1%; and trustworthiness, 2%. Only facilitate enjoyment accounted for significant unique variance at time one and at time two. See Table 3 for the affinity-seeking regression coefficients.

Table 3

Multiple Regression of Affinity-Seeking Strategies on Liking at Time Two

Affinity-Seeking Strategy	r	b	ß
1. Altruism	.34*	.15	.02
2. Assume Control	.01	-1.68*	-.19
3. Assume Equality	.47*	.74	.09
4. Comfortable Self	.43*	.98	.12
5. Concede Control	.30*	-1.03	-.10
6. Conversational Rule-Keeping	.33*	.22	.03
7. Dynamism	.50*	.01	.00
8. Elicit Other's Disclosure	.48*	1.70*	.20
9. Facilitate Enjoyment	.55*	2.31*	.27
10. Inclusion of Others	.18**	.78	.05
11. Influence Perceptions of Closeness	.16**	.63	.06
12. Listening	.40*	.37	.04
13. Nonverbal Immediacy	.39*	-.36	.04
14. Openness	.20*	-.96	-.10
15. Optimism	.48*	1.20**	.14
16. Personal Autonomy	.00	-.12	-.10
17. Physical Attractiveness	.41*	1.28**	.17
18. Presenting Interesting Self	.26*	.66	.07
19. Reward Association	.01	-.12	-.01
20. Self-Concept Confirmation	.29*	.55	.06
21. Self-Inclusion	.01	-2.06	-.12
22. Sensitivity	.43*	1.39**	.14
23. Similarity	.15	-.43	-.04
24. Supportiveness	.21*	.28	.03
25. Trustworthiness	.44*	1.66*	.17

* $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$

DISCUSSION

The two primary objectives of this research, to develop a generic liking scale and to investigate the association between the affinity-seeking strategies and teacher liking , were achieved. The liking scale was determined to be a reliable, stable, unidimensional scale that measures felt liking for another person. An advantage of this liking scale over Rubin's (1970) liking and loving scales, is that the present scale can be used appropriately in many contexts. This liking scale can be used to measure

liking between health care providers and patients, between co-workers, between superiors and subordinates, as well as in student-teacher relationships.

The 25 affinity-seeking strategies accounted for 53% of the variance in liking at time one and 61% of the variance at time two, indicating that teachers' use of affinity-seeking strategies is indeed associated with increased liking of teachers by students. There was a great deal of consistency between time one and time two in terms of the affinity-seeking strategies that had the largest correlations with liking. Assume equality, dynamism, elicit other's disclosure, and facilitate enjoyment were correlated at $\geq .40$ with liking at time one and time two. These strategies were also found to be positively associated with motivation and affective learning by Richmond (1990) and Frymier and Thompson (1991).

As expected, not all of the strategies were associated with liking, indicating that not all of the affinity-seeking strategies may be appropriate for the classroom. Assume control, reward association, self-inclusion, and similarity had small nonsignificant Pearson Product Moment correlations with liking at both times one and two. The affinity-seeking strategies of assume control and reward association are probably associated with authority and legitimate power, both of which teachers already have, and use of these strategies may lead to perceptions of the teacher being overbearing or control oriented which does not increase students' liking for the teacher. Therefore, these strategies should probably be avoided by teachers in the classroom.

Additionally, at time one similarity and personal autonomy had significant negative regression coefficients indicating that use of these two strategies were associated with decreased liking of instructors by students. Although the regression coefficients for these two strategies were not

significant at time two, they were negative. The personal autonomy affinity-seeking strategy includes behaviors such as presenting self as an independent free-thinker, who when disagreeing with a student states her/his opinion and is confident that he/she is right. The similarity affinity-seeking strategy includes behaviors such as expressing views similar to the student's, pointing out things he/she has in common with the student, and tries to make the student feel as if he/she has attitudes, beliefs, and values similar to the teacher's. While these behaviors are appropriate in the interpersonal context (Bell & Daly, 1984), these behaviors appear to be viewed as inappropriate by students. Teachers may already be perceived by students as being autonomous, and increasing perceptions of personal autonomy may create too much distance between teacher and student to produce liking. Similarity with the instructor may not be expected or desired by students at the college level, and therefore establishing similarity may violate the students' expectations for an appropriate student-teacher relationship.

Affinity-seeking strategies that were most predictive of liking were: assume equality--teacher presents self as an equal; conversational rule-keeping--teacher follows the cultural norms for socializing, is polite, and demonstrates interest in what the student says; elicit other's disclosure--teacher inquires about the student's interests and opinions and provides positive reinforcement for responses; facilitate enjoyment--teacher develops a classroom environment that is enjoyable and where learning is both interesting and entertaining; and optimism--teacher presents a positive outlook, as a person who is pleasant to be around, and someone who is not critical of self or others. With the exception of assume equality, all of these strategies were found to be positively and significantly associated with student motivation and teacher credibility by

research on teachers' use of affinity-seeking strategies and increased affective and perceived cognitive learning by students.

Although the research conducted has established a relationship between teacher use (frequency of use) of affinity-seeking and student motivation and learning, there is relatively little knowledge of the effectiveness of each of the affinity-seeking strategies to increase liking in the instructional context. In an interpersonal context, Bell and Daly (1984) found all strategies to be positively associated with liking and loving. It has been assumed that teacher use of affinity-seeking would increase liking as it would in an interpersonal context. However, with the exception of the effort by Frymier and Thompson (1991), there has been no attempt to determine if teacher use of the affinity-seeking strategies does indeed facilitate liking in the classroom, and which strategies are most useful in the classroom. The focus of the present research is to determine which strategies are associated with liking for the instructor. A liking scale was developed for this purpose. Rubin's (1970) liking scale was not used in this study because of its interpersonal nature. The scale contains items such as, "When I am with ___, we are almost always in the same mood," which is not representative of a typical student-teacher relationship. It is logical that teacher use of affinity-seeking strategies would produce student liking for the teacher, based on Bell and Daly's (1984) scale development efforts, and research findings associating affinity-seeking with affective learning. Since the affinity-seeking typology was developed in an interpersonal context, it is likely that not all of the affinity-seeking strategies would be appropriate for the classroom. Evidence of this proposition is indicated in previous research that has found some strategies to be more highly associated with affective learning (Richmond, 1990; Roach, 1991) and character (Frymier & Thompson, 1992)

The relationship between a teacher and her/his students is important to the mood of the classroom in an immediate sense, and probably influences the students' attitudes about learning and education in the long term. Providing teachers with concrete strategies for improving their relationship with students is therefore a useful endeavor. The present research has found support for the use of facilitating enjoyment, dynamism, eliciting other's disclosure, conversational rule-keeping, and optimism by teaches in the classroom. Personal autonomy and similarity should be avoided by teachers, since these strategies were negatively associated student liking for the teacher.

Note

[1]The affinity-seeking and liking scales, that are reported in the present study, were collected at the middle and end of the semester (time 2 and time 3 in the larger panel study). For clarity, Time One and Time Two will be used to refer to the middle and end of the semester, since data collected at the beginning of the semester is not reported in this paper. Other scales used in the panel study included: state and trait motivation, verbal and nonverbal immediacy, and affective and cognitive learning.

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